

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—In your October issue Mrs. Ursula Grant Duff advocates Family Allowances. Whether these would be good or evil depends on the exact proposal made. To give allowances for two or three children might be an excellent thing. To give allowances for an unlimited number would be an unmitigated curse.

Unfortunately Mrs. Grant Duff favours a scheme "covering the entire child population up to at least the age of fifteen at a rate of at least 5s. per child." Among the arguments she uses is that by allowances "German fertility has increased by over 30 per cent since 1933."

It would be hard to imagine a worse reason for giving allowances. We are at this moment in the midst of a war avowedly waged by Germany, Italy and Japan because they lack *Lebensraum*; in other words, because they are overpopulated. That they really are overpopulated is proved to the hilt by Mr. Colin Clark in his recent book, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*. He shows that nearly all the countries which have a high standard of life are thinly populated. Those which lead the world are New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Canada, United States, Switzerland and Great Britain. The first five have very thin populations, Switzerland lives on her tourist trade and Britain draws much wealth from her empire. Every other populous country is miserably poor, with the partial exception of Holland, which also has a large empire.

One country—Ireland—has actually reduced her population. A hundred years ago she had eight million people. To-day she has only four. As a result, she has raised her standard of life more than any other country in the world.

Even those who are foolish enough to believe in dense populations have no cause for alarm. Our population is still growing rapidly at the same rate as for many years past. In 1939 the population of Great Britain and Northern Ireland increased by 182,000. The average increase for the previous fifteen years was 184,000. We have less natural increase, but thousands of immigrants are pouring in, and hundreds of thousands of additional would-be immigrants are battering at our doors, demanding admittance. From a eugenic standpoint immigrants are far superior to children, for you can pick your immigrants with an accuracy which it is impossible to apply to children.

Even if we needed to stimulate the birth-rate, the method proposed would be the worst imaginable. The five shillings a week would make a powerful appeal to the poorest class of women, and

would mean nothing to the more prosperous. Mr. Clark shows that all over the world unemployment exists mainly among the unskilled, and that this tendency must increase with the advance of science. We should thus be breeding the very children for whom there is no economic need.

Finally, Mrs. Grant Duff appeals to "the well-to-do classes." Where are they? There may be a few in the West End of London, but elsewhere the species is extinct. In Croydon there are many fine old houses which were once inhabited by the rich, but to-day they are occupied by stenographers and bank clerks. Mr. Colin Clark shows that 77 per cent of the total production of this country is paid direct in wages and salaries. A huge slice of the remainder is taken by taxation and given to the workers. Many valuable producers do not receive their pay in the form of wages or salaries. The parasites who remain are mostly at the lower end of the scale. After this war any family allowances will have to be provided by taxing the workers. They will take good care that their hard-earned money is not used to stimulate the slum birth-rate.

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To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Mr. Kerr, in his anxiety lest the vast sum of 5s. a week should prove to be a bribe inducing people to resort to families of "unlimited number," overlooks many simple facts, such as the reasons for which Family Allowances are being advocated by reasonable people from many different points of view. Foremost amongst these are: (1) That our child population would have a better chance, not only of surviving, but of growing up with a finer physique and intelligence if better nourished, etc., in childhood. (2) That children are a national asset and that therefore the State should help parents to feed as well as to educate them. (3) That family allowances would be a more efficient, and far less costly, way of meeting the rising cost of living than a general all-round increase of wages, which would greatly increase the risk of inflation.

These are only a few of the many reasons which the readers of Miss Rathbone's book will find so ably set forth. Family Allowances are a vast subject and everyone will agree with Mr. Kerr that much "good or evil depends on the exact proposals made."

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